

1 PETER

Introduction

Author. The first verse of the book identifies Peter the apostle as the author. The contents and the character of the work support his authorship as well. The earliest Church fathers as well attest his authorship: Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Some however, based upon the relatively polished style of Greek which is used, have claimed that the letter is beyond Peter's ability. They would ascribe the rough Greek of 2 Peter to this author. The answer to this problem may be found in 5:12 in the words, "With the help of Silas . . . I have written you briefly." Thus, the polished style of 1 Peter may reflect the ability of his amanuensis, Silas, while the rather rough Greek of 2 Peter may better reflect Peter himself.

Date. Because the letter reflects familiarity with Paul's prison letters it is probably best dated after 62 A. D. If Peter's martyrdom can be dated around 67 or 68 then the book would fit well in to the early part Nero's reign.

Occasion. From the text of the letter, Peter's flock in Asia Minor must have been enduring certain fiery trials. Whether this can be connected with the persecution of Nero is difficult to determine. These people were, however, in need of encouragement to endure patiently because of the eternal inheritance which was theirs.

Message Statement. *The proper Christian testimony in the midst of trials is based upon the Christian's imperishable hope of glory and the pattern of Jesus.*

Argument

- 1A INTRODUCTION 1:1-2
Peter emphasizes the calling of God early in his work and also its goal. He states that God chose believers *for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood* (1:2). Thus, the salvation with which each believer has been blessed is not without its implications. The one who has been so blessed is obligated to obey the One Who has sanctified him.
- 1B THE PRAISE FOR SALVATION 1:3-12
Peter first gives praise to God for the salvation which He has granted. He then develops his praise along the following three lines of thought.
- 1B The Future Reality: An Imperishable Glory 1:3-5
Peter's basic point in this section is that the blessing of salvation is an eternal one. Neither the glory which is to come nor the believer himself can be harmed. The inheritance of the believer is termed imperishable and reserved and the believer is shielded by God's power. This is the basis for both rejoicing and proper behavior.
- 2B The Present Reality: The Refining of Faith Through Trials 1:6-9
Although the future is a basis of rejoicing, the present will be fraught with suffering and trials. These trials, however, are a positive factor in that they have come to refine and prove the faith of the Christian. Trials are the means of faith refinement.

- 3B The Pattern of Reality: The Suffering and Glory of Jesus Christ 1:10-12
This section ties the previous two sections together and provides a working model of behavior for the Christian. It indicates that, just like the Christian, Jesus both suffered in his earthly life and also received glory afterwards. This is the pattern of life for those who are heirs of salvation as it is defined in Scripture.
- 1C THE IMPLICATIONS OF SALVATION 1:13--4:6
Peter begins the body of his letter with the word *therefore*. The behavior of the Christian has its basis in the blessings of salvation and the example of Christ. He first outlines the Godward responsibilities of the believer and then those involving men.
- 1B The Vertical 1:13-21
Man's first responsibility is toward his God. Peter delineates both what God expects of the believer and why He expects it.
- 1C The Calling of God: Holiness 1:13-17
In a quotation from the book of Leviticus Peter calls on his flock to "be holy as God is holy" (Leviticus 11:44, 45). By setting his hope on the future glory to be received at the coming of Christ, the believer is to reject the pressure of his evil nature and *Be holy, because I am holy* (1:16).
- 2C The Basis of the Calling: Jesus' Sacrifice on Calvary 1:18-21
The reason for this demand on the life of the believer is because of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. The high cost of the sacrifice demonstrates the value placed upon man's redemption by God. And the resurrection gives man confidence that the sacrifice was accepted by the Father.
- 2B The Horizontal 1:22--4:6
In the words of Jesus, man's second responsibility (which is also one with the first) is to love his neighbor as himself. In this way Christians will reflect the glory of the Father and serve as lights to a dark world.
- 1C To Christians: to love 1:22--2:3
When it comes to loving one's neighbor, Peter is concerned, as was Paul (Gal 6:10) that believers show their love particularly to believers. He emphasizes the thought by repetition, ". . . have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart" (1:22).
- 2C To the world: to be a light 2:4--4:6
Throughout this section Peter is careful to remind the reader of the final goal of his instruction: that the behavior of the believer might be a convicting testimony to the world (2:9, 12, 15; 3:1, 16; 4:4, 5). He begins by citing the example of Jesus who, though rejected (suffered), was a witness to the nation. Peter then plainly states his point in 2:9, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, *that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*"
- The two basic methods for accomplishing this testimony in the world which Peter outlines seem to be the believer's submission (2:13--3:12) and his suffering (3:13--4:6). Peter outlines the various spheres in which submission is appropriate (to the government, 2:13-17; to masters, 2:18-25; and to husbands, 3:1-7. In 3:13--4:6 Peter admonishes the reader to be ready to suffer, offers him the example of Christ and outlines the resulting testimony which this will have to the unsaved world.
- 1D CONCLUSION 4:7--5:14
Peter concludes his letter with a number of miscellaneous exhortations. He is never far removed, however, from his theme of suffering now in light of the eternal glory which will be revealed (5:10).
- 1B Miscellaneous Exhortations 4:7-11
Love, hospitality and confidence in speaking are among Peter's topics in this section. He closes with a short doxology.
- 2B Suffering Reconsidered 4:12-19
Peter next addresses the topic of suffering once again. This time, however, he seems to add the concept of the possibility of wrongful suffering. His final counsel is for the sufferer to commit himself to God and continue to do good (4:19).
- 3B Exhortations to Leaders 5:1-4

Peter clearly addresses this section to the leadership of the flock. His counsel is to be examples to the flock, and his motivation comes, as in the rest of the book, from the reward of the second coming of Christ.

- 4B Exhortations to Laity 5:5-11
Peter evidently moves from the clergy to the laity in this section. His advice is general, concerning humility. His motivation, once again, comes from the glory which will be given the believer in eternity.
- 5B Final Conclusion 5:12-14
Paul intimates that Silas may have penned the letter in this section. The place of writing, Babylon, is probably Rome.

